

Boat builder Roger reaches fifty knot out

by Karen Britton

A BOAT builder who has been hand-crafting hulls and toiling over timber for 22 years has made his 50th boat.

Roger Wilkinson, 54, has made every one of his 'Kittiwake' sailing boats with his own fair hands - building at his workshop on a farm near Pott Shrigley and selling to buyers all over the world.

One of Roger's more unusual water-borne creations is his fully-functional 24ft two-man battleship with guns - which he used to take on a Russian warship.

The self-proclaimed 'big kid', of Robin Lane, Macclesfield, said: "I fired at the Russians from my battleship!

"I took the ship down to an event in Portsmouth dockyard to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

"There was a Russian missile cruiser there, it was really unusual to see one and I thought I would make my approach.

"There I was tootling along next to it and all the officers came out to take pictures so I fired one of my firework rockets right at them."

Another controversial move was when Roger appeared at the Wooden Boat Show in Greenwich, London, in 1987 - and caught the eye of BBC presenter and show host David Dimbleby by showing up with his fibre-glass boat.

Roger said: "I didn't know it was a

purist wooden show and that I'd entered hallowed ground with a fibreglass boat.

"Luckily David Dimbleby was opening the show and said how nice it was to see a fibreglass boat with so much wood in it."

Although not invited back to that show again, Roger went on to demonstrate his boats at exhibitions all over the country.

Roger, who used to have a workshop at Capesthorpe Hall, is self-taught and does everything on the boats, from moulding the fibreglass hulls to fitting them out with wooden decking and seating and fixing the sails.

He started his floating industry after working for 20 years in ground operations at Manchester Airport.

The keen sailor, who spends his time on the water in North Wales, said: "I had always tinkered with old boats, but one day had a Eureka! moment and decided to try and make some money out of it.

"I worked both jobs for ten years but then decided that if I made three orders in the year I would go full time with the boat building - and I did.

"It's scary making the move to do it full time, but it's great being your own boss.

"I wanted to make it to 50 boats, and will keep going.

"Doing something creative like this is important, I get a lot of pleasure out of doing a good job." For information visit kittiwakeboats.co.uk or call Roger on 01260 252157.



PLAIN SAILING: Roger in one of his creations at his workshop near Pott Shrigley roads10902



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